

Poppy POV

Killian chugged his beer as he rubbed the back of his neck. "Nash came here last evening. He was supposed to come a month later but I have no idea why he changed his mind and came earlier than he had to. He had to finish some advanced course in astrology."

"Astrology?" Damon repeated. "That's lame."

"That is one of the courses offered in the academy and it entails knowledge about the moon and stars in relation to the wolf cycle," Killian said. "Very useful for rituals and those who want to learn magic from witches. Though no one has tried learning magic from them."

"That course can't even touch the first layer of uncovering magic. It's a lame course from that aspect but I feel it is fine with shifters who are interested in the moon and stars," Anna scoffed.

I hated the way things were turning out. There was going to be a problem between the Umbra pack and the Nascent Moon pack and I would be the source of it. I shifted in my place uncomfortably.

"But you have to be careful, Damon," Killian warned him,

keeping his voice low and serious. "Monica is not going to keep quiet about it. And for the record she is still your betrothed."

Damon gritted his teeth and looked away, muttering some curses. "I will go and tell it to father that I don't want to marry her!"

"How are you going to explain it?" Killian shot back, clearly irritated by his Alpha's statement. "Your father, Kevin Lombard, Alpha of the Umbra pack is going to lash at you for not keeping your words. And—" he shot a glance at me. "And of course he is going to shred you into pieces for saying that you want to marry the princess of the Shadow pack. You do know the consequences, do you?"

"Then what am I supposed to do?" Damon retorted. "I won't accept Monica and that is final!"

Killian took a deep breath as if to calm himself. "We have to look for a way around it. But first we have to worry about the fact that Monica doesn't snitch to your dad. If that happens, you are doomed!"

"What would be the worst?" Damon growled. "He will throw me out of the pack. Come what may. I won't leave Poppy."

Anna made a heart for him and blew a kiss in the air. "Would you be my lover?" she said with stars in her eyes.

I smacked Anna as Eliza laughed and Damon growled at her baring his fangs. "Keep dreaming, witch!"

Anna laughed and laughed. "Killian is right, Damon. After today's incident, things are going to take a bitter turn."

I was feeling totally burned out. I rubbed the back of my neck. Memories of how I tackled Monica flashed across my mind. How was I so fast? It was strange. It was as if a new me wanted to come out. And sometimes there was this being that stirred in me. I could feel the flutter of it. Or was it my imagination? All at once my phone rang. When I saw the screen, I almost jumped up with a squeal. It was Hilda.

As Damon watched me with suspicion and jealousy, I bounced off outside to talk to Hilda in private.

"How are you doing, Poppy?" she asked in a tender voice.

"Hildaaa! I am well. How are you?" I breathed still, unable to believe that she called. After I had come, no one even bothered about me. Not that I should be caring or expecting but Hilda's voice made my eyes burn with tears.

"I am well too, pup," she said with a sad voice. "I miss you a lot."

"I miss you too," I cried. There was a long silence. Then I asked, "H— how is grandfather?"

Partial Feeling

"As usual," she scoffed. "He thinks no end of himself and rarely ever thinks about you."

That made me sadder than it should have. Did that man never have even a single emotion about me? "It's fine," I said with a choked throat.

"I called to check upon you, pup. Hope you aren't feeling nervous and anxious," Hilda's soft voice calmed me down.

I wondered if I should tell her about this. She was the closest to having a relative in my life, so I said to her. "I feel as if—as if there is something inside me that wants to make an expression of its own these days. Do you think that is my wolf, Hilda? I feel like—" my breath was labored and excited. "I think I might have found it."

There was a short pause at the other side and I could imagine Hilda's surprise. But her words brought me back to reality. "Oh you poor, poor pup. You can't shift. Don't bear those dreams for you are going to feel miserable if you can't achieve them. Have you had your tea recently? You must have it every time you get that feeling. It will help you calm down, okay?"

"But Hilda—"

"Poppy," she cut me off. "Trust me I have seen you since you were a pup. You need that tea to calm down. Your grandfather used to hit you so much and you would become

so anxious. That was why I used to give that tea. Take it, okay. It will calm down your thoughts and stop dreaming that you can shift. You would have shifted when you were eighteen. You are twenty-two. I have never heard of wolves shifting that late. Your time to shift has sailed. It is too late, pup."

I pursed my lips as a familiar feeling of dejection returned with full force, rendering me helpless. It was better to accept it than to harbor dreams about it. My tears fell down my cheeks. A finger wiped them and I jerked my gaze up only to see Damon through my blurry vision. "Okay Hilda," I said. "I will have that tea."

"Good for you, Poppy," she replied with a sigh of relief. "I am going to call you in the evening to check upon you."

I giggled through my tears. She was such a lovely nanny. "Okay!"